

Turning a page, starting a chapter

30 April – 09 July

Sione Faletau (Aotearoa/Tonga)

Ana Iti (Te Rarawa)

Jade Townsend (Ngāti Kahungunu)

The Booth: Breeze Durham (Te Hikutu, Ngāti Kura, Ngāti Ruamahue)

Turning a page, starting a chapter presents newly commissioned artworks by three exciting Aotearoa-based artists. This exhibition continues Gus Fisher Gallery's interest in working with artists and site, enabling artists to present ambitious experimental artworks in a heritage setting. Through sculpture, video and audio, the artists in this exhibition expand or revisit aspects of their practice, embarking on new chapters where the potential for dialogue and fresh lines of enquiry can emerge.

Branching through the distinct architectural spaces of Gus Fisher Gallery, the artists examine histories of surface, environment and place in different ways. In dialogue with the building's history and architecture, Sione Faletau interprets the *vā* in the gallery—known as the space in between things for Moana Oceania people. His new video *Ongo Ongo* uses audio recorded on site to generate patterns that motion and swell with movement and is presented with an existing work *Tolu Katea*. Alongside, Ana Iti brings together her video and sculptural practices for the first time in *Roharoha*. Iti uses the flight of the native kahukura as a way to think about making and the creative process, forging a connection between the butterfly and the form and structure of pages of a book. Jade Townsend combines sculpture and audio to consider places of worship. Informed in part by the church-like windows of the gallery, Townsend's installation invites the audience to return with her to a particular home in pre-religion Aotearoa.

On display in The Booth is *Kei Waenganui o ngā atua wāhine* by Breeze Durham. Consisting of audio from nine Wāhine Māori, each share advice they wish had been given to them as emerging practitioners and offer their hopes for future generations.

Turning a page, starting a chapter embraces the artistic potential of experimentation through the creation of artworks that speak to new threads of art-making and the sites that they temporarily inhabit.

The exhibition is accompanied by an essay by Olive Wilson, a current student at Waipapa Taumata Rau.

Sione Faletau (Aotearoa, Tonga)

Ongo Ongo

2022

video

three minutes, thirty seconds

Tolu Katea

2021

video

one minute, fifty-two seconds

Sione Faletau's artwork is informed by his continued interest in the symbolism of *vā*. For Moana Oceania people, *vā* is known as the space between things. It also means to care for, maintain, and nurture relationships. Faletau uses the word *vā* to create Tongan kupesi patterns and the resulting patterns reference those seen in the Tongan craft of *ngatu* and *lalava*.

For *Ongo Ongo*, Faletau has interpreted the *vā* in Gus Fisher Gallery to honour the building's broadcasting history and its transmission of news reports, sound waves and frequencies. Faletau extracted the audio wave spectrum from a recording he made in the space and created patterns that reflected the sound of the room. The resulting video is a fast-paced hypnotic montage of interchangeable patterns that flicker and swell through movement. The patterns recall the surrounding architecture while the audio traces the sounds of the gallery—each footstep and door shutting evoking a change in the visual frequency.

In *Tolu Katea*, kupesi patterns burst onto the screen building to a powerful crescendo, their form and repetition akin to their architectural surrounds. Featuring a choir of voices whose song unify and activate the patterns' motions, the range of voice frequencies are represented in digital form and are apparent when you hear them sing. Faletau says, "The human spirit, through the voices, drives the kupesi to connect and disconnect giving rise to new kupesi every time."

The audio in *Tolu Katea* is an extract of the audio waves from Himi 114 'Eiki koe 'Ofa A'Au performed by Tupou College Toloa students. Metaphorically, *Tolu Katea* represents an image of three interconnected canoes that keep each other afloat on the deep moana.

Ongo Ongo in Tongan means news, while the word *ongo* on its own means sound, feel and feeling. These dual meanings are integral to the artist's work, stating that "through feeling you create sound and through sound you create feeling."

Courtesy of the artist

Jade Townsend (Ngāti Kahungunu)

Neke, neke. You are free.

2022

mixed media

Ships Bell

2022

Audio

Riki Gooch (Ngaati Wai, Patuharakeke, Ngaati Mahanga)

Neke, neke. You are free draws on the artist's own upbringing—the Catholicism of her maternal side and the Māori Christian religion of Rātana from her paternal side—to discuss nostalgia, memory, healing, unity, whakamā and deliverance. Townsend's installation plays on the visceral reaction felt in places of worship and how certain acts such as the chiming of bells or the gathering of a congregation can evoke individual participation in feelings of shame or guilt.

'Neke' has multiple translations in te reo Māori, the most common to the artist is 'move' which she hears most between the kaiako and her son at te kōhanga reo. Used at the end of the day to encourage him to stop and collect his things in preparation for home, Townsend's latest installation invites the audience to return with her to a particular idea of 'home' in pre-religion Aotearoa.

Townsend's veils are cultural translations. They symbolise the space between past and present and represent a line of convergence between the spiritual and physical. Here, the veil is free-standing and kinetic. The height of the native timber bracket is the scale of a domestic doorway while the width is slightly grander, described by Townsend as perhaps an entrance to an outside space. The audience is welcome to walk through, beneath and into the work, feeling its materiality and the changing effects of light on either side.

Townsend's installation has been influenced by her research into *Ship's Bell*, the first known bell in Aotearoa held in the collection of Te Papa Tongarewa and forms the basis for the meditative audio accompanying the work. *Neke Neke. You are free* is conceived as a consciously fictitious or contrived spiritual scene. Townsend asks "Does it offer an experience closer to redemption and self-forgiveness than traditional religious ceremonies of deliverance?"

Courtesy of the artist

Ana Iti (Te Rarawa)

Roharoha

2022

video installation

Ana Iti's new installation brings together the video and sculptural strands of her practice for the first time and is informed by a concurrent project where she is developing her own artist's book.

Roharoha means to stretch, flutter wings or flap in te reo Māori. In the context of Iti's artwork, *Roharoha* refers to the movements of the kahukura, a red admiral butterfly native to Aotearoa which as a caterpillar cloaks itself in the poisonous ongaonga nettle. Kahukura translates as 'red cloak' in reference to its bright red banding across its wings. Ongaonga is the primary host for the red admiral larvae and throughout their life the kahukura use the nettle as a form of protection by cloaking themselves in its leaf during the day.

The installation itself mimics the shape of an open book, and projected video on each side is akin to its pages. Iti's video is conceptually informed by the transformation of the kahukura from a caterpillar, with a flashing of block colours bookending different stages of its evolution. This is followed by a close-up of the artist performing a hand-binding technique sometimes used for small publications with the act of binding pages a metaphor for a butterfly's cocoon. The video ends with the closing of the book—a period of rest for the kahukura and a chance to retreat under the protective layer of the ongaonga nettle.

For Iti, the kahukura's flight is a way to think about making and the creative process. Characterised by periods of continual gliding, rest and frenzied fluttering, the butterfly is iterative and makes multiple generations in a year. By using the kahukura's flight as a guide, *Roharoha* reflects on how creative ideas develop and take shape, from the first flickering of an idea through to stages of making and the creation of a final form.

Courtesy of the artist